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ABSTRACT

This policy discussion paper is intended to stimulate debate about how to develop more and better opportunities for formal and nonformal environmental education for British adults. A summary found at the beginning of the paper lists its implications for the government, all providers of adult education, all providers of work-related training, businesses, the voluntary sector, and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education. The paper considers the case for environmental adult education, reports on the level and kinds of activity that currently exist, and identifies a series of developments that are desirable and necessary steps in the transition to a more sustainable society, using government legislation and responsible individual, workplace, and community action as appropriate. In the belief that practices of educational organizations should act as examples, the paper also considers the process of institutional change. Contains 14 references. (YLB)

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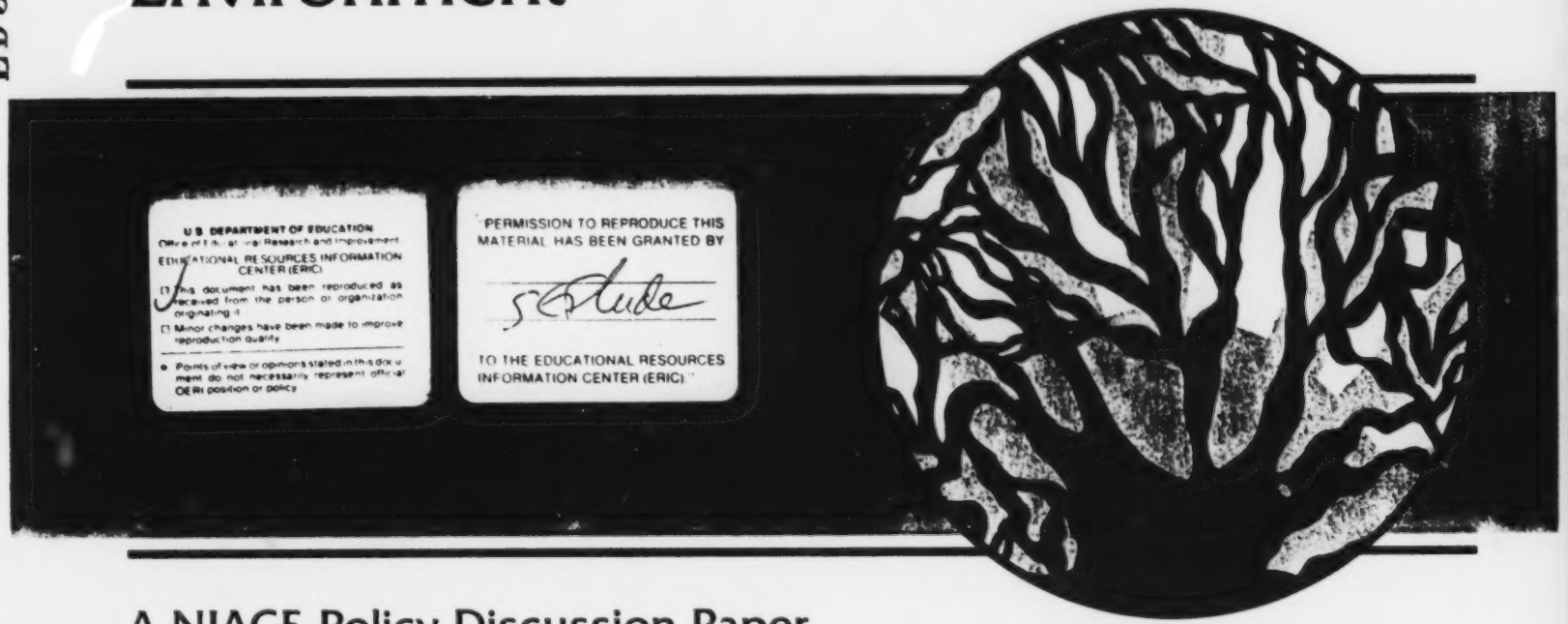
Learning for the Future

Adult Learning and the Environment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A NIACE Policy Discussion Paper
April 1993

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National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales)

NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, is the national organisation representing the interests of everyone concerned with adult learning. It is active in research, development, publications, seminars, conferences and in organising Adult Learners' Week. NIACE works closely with colleges, TECs and employers, as well as with local authorities and national government. NIACE plays a central role in advising on developments in policy and practice in all forms of education and training for adults, promoting equal opportunities of access for all.

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Learning for the Future

Adult Learning and the Environment

A NIACE Policy Discussion Paper

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

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Summary

Education is one of the most effective ways of securing change and achieving a more sustainable society. To date insufficient policy attention has been given to the challenge of developing education for sustainability for adults. Much needs to be done to ensure that adults – as citizens, consumers, employers, workers and parents – are able to develop the social and political skills, and acquire the knowledge and awareness, that they and our society need.

The implications of this discussion paper for different organisations are summarised below.

Government

- Adopt base-line targets for environmental awareness for the adult population.
- Adopt evaluation schemes for assessing effectiveness of public information campaigns on environmental issues.
- Liaise with adult educators over environmental education and information activities.
- Assist lead bodies to develop environmental care content in vocational qualifications.
- Aim to be exemplary in environmental institutional practice and staff training in all government-run establishments.
- Initiate and fund research and co-operation for joint strategies for education for sustainability of the adult population.

All Providers of Adult Education

- Start the process of curriculum and resources review.
- Gather staff suggestions for introducing environmental issues right across the curriculum.
- Investigate partnerships, develop liaison with businesses, voluntary groups and local government.

'We believe it is more effective in terms of costs and benefits to aim to prevent environmental problems through effective and widespread education than to cure them through regulation, control, site protection and government incentives.'

Good Earthkeeping, 1992.

- Initiate staff development and training on environmental issues both in the curriculum and institutional organisation.
- Participate in the development of joint strategies towards education for sustainability.

All Providers of Work-related Training

- Question lead bodies on environmental content of courses.
- Investigate environmental responsibilities that should be included in job descriptions and ensure they are included in training.
- Liaise with other providers to develop these standards.
- Include course discussion on the purposes of environmental standards.
- Participate in the development of joint strategies towards education for sustainability.

Businesses

- Investigate level of management and shop-floor environmental awareness and training.
- Set up appropriate training schemes within the business.
- Investigate environmental responsibilities that should be included in job descriptions and ensure they are included in training.
- Liaise with other providers to develop these standards.
- Include course discussion on the purposes of environmental standards.
- Participate in the development of joint stategies towards education for sustainability.

Voluntary Sector

- Involve adult education bodies and expertise in planning adult environmental education activities.
- Develop partnership activities, both in research and provision of adult environmental education.

- Participate in the development of joint strategies towards education for sustainability.

NIACE

- Investigate possible joint research projects in the following areas of interest:
  - current levels of adult environmental awareness
  - the relative effectiveness of different forms of information
  - developing active environmental education
  - developing adult education for environmental citizenship
  - adult motivation in environmental education
  - teaching environmental values to adults.
- Raise the social policy issues relating to the exclusion of some social groups from adult environmental education in NIACE's own committees and elsewhere.
- Discuss partnership activities on a regular basis with other providers.
- Participate in UK and international environmental education conferences, etc.
- Introduce appropriate staff training and development programmes within NIACE.
- Take a lead role in encouraging members to begin the process of institutional 'greening'.

Preface

The decisions and choices of all – as citizens, consumers, employers, workers and parents – need to be informed by an awareness of their impact upon the wider world around us. There is a need to improve the level of environmental awareness among the adult population. Indeed, NIACE believes that improving adult learning about the environment is one of the most significant challenges of our time.

This policy discussion paper is intended to stimulate debate about how we develop more and better opportunities for environmental education for adults, both formal and informal. The purpose of these opportunities should clearly be to create greater understanding of the issues, so that all can make informed decisions for the future. The paper starts by considering the case for environmental adult education; goes on to report on the level and kinds of activity that currently exist; and then identifies a series of developments which are desirable and, in our view, necessary steps in the transition to a more sustainable society, using government legislation and responsible individual, workplace and community action as appropriate. In the belief that the practices of educational organisations should act as examples, it also considers the process of institutional change.

The paper was drawn up by NIACE's Working Party on Environmental Adult Education. The Working Party's members were:

John Field (convenor) University of Bradford

Margaret Davey Croydon Continuing Education and Training Service/NIACE Executive

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David Pearson Barbican YMCA

Jenny Pugh National Federation of Women's Institutes

Richard Ross Workers' Educational Association

Erica Towner University of Sussex

David Wardrop United Nations Association

Their work has been serviced by Howard Fisher, Associate Director of NIACE. The Working Party is grateful to Shirley Ali Khan of the University of Hertfordshire and CEE and Sally Richardson of WWF for their advice at various stages. Consultations were held with interested parties; ideas and proposals were debated by an invitation seminar in February 1992 and a national conference in July 1992. In addition, the Working Party led a workshop at the Institute's Annual Study Conference in April 1992. In investigating existing practice, the Working Party undertook a preliminary survey of member organisations.

We believe that it is appropriate to encourage both specialist environmental education provision *and* the 'greening' of *all* adult education and training. Otherwise, debates over definitions were resolved pragmatically. We took the adult education sector to include all aspects of the education and training of the adult population; this includes employment-related learning within companies and informal learning within voluntary bodies and movements, as well as more formal adult education activities. We agreed that environmental education encompassed all planned learning which had as its aim:

> *to develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about the environment and its associated problems and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation and commitment to work individually and collectively towards the solution of current problems and the prevention of new ones* (UNESCO, 1975).

It is widely accepted that schools should encourage pupils to develop a concern for the environment, and learn how to contribute towards a sustainable future. This paper addresses the work of organisations and individuals involved in the education and training of adults.

We also briefly address the question of institutional change in the context of the learning experience as a whole. However, it is not the purpose of this document to provide a comprehensive guide to the processes of 'greening the institution'; other publications deal more fully with this aspect (see references.)

Some Definitions

Education for sustainability. For the environmental movement, sustainability has come to mean the development of ways of living that ensure that sufficient natural resources endure to continue to support life in the future. Its full implications have still to be worked out. This poses a particular challenge to educationalists, whose task is often seen as being connected with economic growth. It illustrates the pace of change which has been generated by environmental questions: we have hardly come to terms with what *environmental education* might mean, and are now asked to reposition our efforts to achieve greater sustainability. In practical terms, it should encourage us to open up space for critical, reflective and exploratory forms of adult education which encourage learning about new ways of living in harmony with the environment without relying on the existence of known, fixed answers to all our problems.

Sustainable development is central to many contemporary policy debates. *Good Earthkeeping* defined it as 'improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems'. Its usual use is with respect to the non-industrial nations, but it has also been extended to apply to efforts to balance economic growth with ecological responsibility in countries such as the United Kingdom.

1
The Case for Environmental Adult Education

1.1 Political Commitments

Governments worldwide appear to agree that environmental education for all citizens is not only desirable but necessary and urgent. The sheer scale of the environmental challenge facing modern society calls for fundamental changes in human attitudes and behaviour. For those changes to be made with commitment and enthusiasm by the overwhelming majority, a vast campaign of education, debate and public participation is required.

Since the June 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, it is now more generally accepted that environment and development are bound together. Governments in all countries accept the need for change in order to achieve more sustainable ways of life that also balance the different needs of developing and developed (or, as some would say, over-developed) nations. Success, or otherwise, will be measured by the extent that changes really are made: individuals, communities, firms, nations and international bodies will all have to face up to the hard truths that confront and divide our world.

Education is vital in all proposals for achieving a sustainable future. In *Caring for the Earth*, the world conservation strategy for the nineties that was produced for Rio, environmental education was seen as crucial for all nations. A section entitled 'Changing Personal Attitudes and Practices' identified the role of formal education; one on 'Enabling Communities to Care for their Own Environments' stressed the need for community environmental action, underpinned by education, training and access to information. European Community environmental legislation continues to impact on the behaviour of individuals, firms and public bodies; the EC has also encouraged citizens to complain over cases of damage or neglect.

Similar concerns have already been expressed by the British government. Its 1990 White Paper, *This Common Inheritance*, set out a strong case for regarding

Who Provides Environmental Adult Education and Training?
Vocational training in the workplace
Adult learning in college-based courses (e.g. Access, 'A' levels)
Management training and consultancy
Vocational courses in colleges
Non-vocational adult classes
Leisure courses for adults (e.g. at field centres)
Trade union education and training
Voluntary sector public information and campaigns
Broadcasting and the press
Formal and informal learning in voluntary groups
Government sponsored information campaigns

'Public debate and decisions, including consumer choices, require sound knowledge and awareness of environmental decisions. The education system must play an important part in promoting environmental awareness, understanding and competences.'

This Common Inheritance: Britain's Environmental Strategy, 1990, 223.

improvements in environmental education and training as fundamental to securing wider changes. In addition, it required all government departments to set targets for themselves, and allows the Department of the Environment to undertake annual monitoring of their performance.

1.2 Current Provision in the Statutory Sector

Furthermore, environmental education has been identified as one of five 'cross-curricular themes' which must be offered right across the National Curriculum in all schools. In *Curriculum Guidance 7*, the National Curriculum Council identified a range of knowledge, skills and attitudes which schools were asked to foster across the curriculum in order to encourage 'satisfactory solutions to environmental issues'. Provision remains patchy, but in many schools pupils take part in a range of lively and well-designed learning – often activity-based – which helps them acquire the appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes. It may not be a model which educators and trainers of adults can adopt uncritically (examination requirements, for example, may be totally inappropriate for adults), but it does provide us with a yardstick by which we can measure the distance that we need to go.

Environmental education is far less systematically developed outside the formal compulsory sector. Two publications – *Greening Polytechnics* (1990) and *Greening the Curriculum* (1991) – were produced as part of a Committee of Directors of Polytechnics initiative. A briefer document describing environmental education within the then university sector was published by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in 1992. The Council for Environmental Education (CEE) is co-ordinating an initiative on Education and Training for Business and the Environment, funded by the Department of the Environment and the World Wide Fund for Nature. Part of this programme included a collaborative project with the Further Education Unit, the outcomes of which included *Colleges Going Green* (1992), which makes a number of extremely valuable recommendations for college-wide action and also reports on current activity in colleges. The CEE programme included a series of seminars for trainers and educators, as recommended in the White Paper. Finally, the government convened a committee on environmental education in further and

higher education, whose recommendations include updating for the workforce. Much, though, remains to be done – and particularly with respect to adult learners in universities and colleges. And this will require the active involvement of professionals and others involved in the education of adults, working together with partners such as the Council for Environmental Education.

1.3 Training

In the field of human resource development (HRD), training for environmental fields has grown rapidly in recent years. Legislation and public opinion have generated external pressures on employers to include environmental considerations in their training programmes; in particular, there are growing numbers of programmes aimed at initial training and updating of specialists in industries affected by environmental legislation. The workforce in those industries concerned directly with environmental conservation and management – estimated at some 109,000 people in 1990 – requires continuing training and development to keep abreast of new knowledge, skills and legislation. Industries such as water supply, food processing, chemicals or pharmaceuticals are vital to society's well-being. National Vocational Qualifications for the environmental industries are being brought into line with national standards laid down by the lead body, the Council for Occupational Standards and Qualifications in Environmental Conservation (COSQUEC), which has recently published draft standards at Levels 2, 3 and 4 (COSQUEC, 1992); environmental competences are with increasing frequency included in the training and development of other occupations. Trainers themselves have actively discussed environmental issues – for example, in the professional institute's monthly, *Training and Development*.

However, environmental HRD is in its early days. Environmental HRD is hampered by significant gaps in employer awareness, especially among senior managers and in small firms, and by a shortage of appropriate training provision. With the exception of trade union training for full-time officers or for health and safety representatives, environmental education for the workforce as a whole is extremely rare. Again, then, much more remains to be done.

'In a nutshell, sympathetic and effective countryside conservation demands imaginative and responsible management, which in turn depends on high-quality training and trainers. Tomorrow's countryside lies in the hands of those who manage it today. Their training is the key to its future.'

Training for Tomorrow's Countryside, Countryside Commission, 1989.

The Environment Council believes that, despite the encouraging growth of environmental management courses, 'it will be two or three years before the field settles as to what consitutes best practice ... There will be different approaches and we want to help ensure that the base levels of content and quality are appropriate.'

Quoted in *PICKUP in Practice*, Spring 1992.

'Voluntary organisations in Britain deserve much of the credit for the great increase in public interest in the environment in recent years.'
This Common Inheritance, 1990.

1.4 The Role of Voluntary Organisations

Voluntary organisations have been at the leading edge of much environmental education for adults. Their greatest achievements have probably been in the field of practice: much informal learning as well as formal provision goes on through such diverse bodies as the Women's Institutes, Conservation Volunteers, Friends of the Earth or local Bat Groups. At a policy level, these groups have been influential simply by example; but they have also engaged in lobbying, both of local education authorities and of government. In preparation for Rio, 21 British non-governmental organisations drew up a report, *Good Earthkeeping*, which outlined the issues that they saw as priorities for the governments of the world: these priorities concerned education, training and awareness for a sustainable future. Education for sustainability should, the authors said, be 'a lifelong and basic component of education and training, and the right of every citizen'.

Voluntary organisations are setting the pace in increasing public awareness of environmental issues, and are also educating their own members and supporters in ways of taking action for a more sustainable future. Many voluntary organisations have established partnerships with schools and sometimes colleges. These can be local and *ad hoc* in nature, such as providing a speaker for a class or a school debate, but in some cases the partnership is a major one, for example the learning materials produced by the World Wide Fund for Nature, geared towards the key stages of the National Curriculum. As yet, relatively little energy has been channeled into building partnerships between voluntary organisations and the adult education sector.

1.5 Why Adults?

Environmental education has developed rapidly in scope, status and quality in recent years. To date, though, attention has focused largely upon the needs of young people, and to a lesser extent specialists in industry. There has been less attention to the needs and potential contribution of adult learners; yet the vast majority of citizens, consumers, workers, employers and parents of the year 2000 have already left full-time education and training. Furthermore, there is some survey evidence that awareness of environmental issues is weaker among

adults, and particularly older adults, than among the young. Adult education and training represents an enormous potential force for change which must be mobilised to achieve environmental improvements.

The reasons for investing energy and resources in environmental education and training for adults are compelling ones:

- We cannot wait for the present generation of school and college students to begin applying their newly-won environmental awareness – we must educate those who are making vital decisions now.
- Environmental education cannot be a once-in-a-lifetime activity but should be continuous and recurrent as our roles change throughout our lifespan.
- Society's awareness and understanding of the natural world changes and evolves; it is not static, and we do not 'know everything' at any point of time.
- Every sector should use its special strengths; the flexibility and range of adult education provision should enable a pioneering role for active inter-disciplinary education.
- Adults must change their behaviour and understanding too if the efforts to educate young people are to have any credibility.
- We must engage the public at large in positive action to achieve environmental solutions if we are to reverse the massive environmental degradation that has taken place.

For all these reasons, we will not achieve the changes we seek without having in place integrated, properly resourced provision for the environmental education and training of adults. What can be done to develop effective opportunities for adults to participate in education for sustainability?

Education is one of the most effective ways of securing changes and achieving a more sustainable society. To date, though, insufficient policy attention has been given to the challenge of developing education for sustainability for adults. Much needs to be done to ensure that adults – as citizens, consumers, employers, workers and parents – are able to develop the social and political skills, and acquire the knowledge and awareness, that they and our society need. The next section considers the extent to which the elements of good practice

More than half of all adults, according to a Field Studies Council survey, are not aware of the basic environmental impact of their own activities.

'We believe it is more effective in terms of costs and benefits to aim to prevent environmental problems through effective and widespread education than to cure them through regulation, control, site protection and government incentives.'

Good Earthkeeping, 1992

already exist. For although environmental education for adults is not yet as comprehensively developed as it should be, there is already an important body of experience which can help inform the future development of policy and practice.

Adult Environmental Education Involves

Affective Learning	• Learning attitudes of respect and care • Learning to value the diversity and beauty of living systems • Learning values of co-operation with living systems
Cognitive Learning	• Learning about our own locality • Learning how living systems work • Learning about human impacts on living systems • Learning about specific environmental problems
Higher Cognitive Learning	• Developing critical and analytical skills • Developing capacity for problem-solving methods and strategies • Exploring ethical issues • Developing skills and knowledge for active citizenship • Analysing and choosing ways of acting

It Implies Changing Our Behaviour

2
What is Being Done?

2.1 Overview of Provision

Education for the environment appears to be a relatively small part of the adult curriculum. If it is narrowly defined in terms of the environmental sciences, then a number of recent surveys have shown that it is of limited significance in continuing vocational education, even less visible within liberal adult education, and almost entirely absent within general adult education (Birke, 1991). During our own discussions, we tried to identify the level of current activity; despite a broad definition of environmental education, our findings are largely in line with previous studies. Nonetheless, there are areas of existing practice which have generated valuable experience. This experience needs to be drawn on if the effectiveness of environmental adult education is to be dramatically improved in the future. Equally, we need to be aware of the shortfalls, and to make the strongest possible case for measures to fill the many gaps which presently exist.

From both our own work and previous surveys, it seems that most opportunities currently are available within the universities, private sector providers and voluntary organisations. Universities and private sector providers tend to dominate the market for continuing vocational education in this field, along with in-house provision within those companies that are providing environmental training. Universities and voluntary organisations (especially the Women's Institutes and Workers' Educational Association) are also involved in providing opportunities for general adult education. However, there are some instances of provision within Further Education colleges and in adult education centres (sometimes working in partnership with voluntary bodies). This raises the questions of how best to secure and extend provision in this sector under the Further Education Funding Council; and of identifying ways of embedding environmental concerns into the mainstream Further Education curriculum, especially where it is geared towards the attainment of NVQs. In addition, there is a need to promote systematic opportunities for environmental learning within

'We have been very pleased and surprised by the success of our Environmental Studies A-Level which was introduced last autumn. This was an experimental course for us.'

National Extension College
Response to NIACE survey, 1992.

the workplace. However, the survey did suggest a strong trend towards study for qualifications in this field: both in general courses and in vocational ones, adult learners appear to be looking for a formal acknowledgement of their achievements.

2.2 Problems of Demand and Presentation

Other issues raised by the survey included:

- The best approach to take in handling environmental issues. There is some evidence that although there certainly is a demand for opportunities to learn about *threats* to the environment, or about environmental politics, most people at present preferred to pursue this through self-directed learning, either in a group of fellow-activists or on their own with books and other resource materials.
- The demand for adult education courses on some topics appeared very limited, partly because they were perceived (and often presented) as purely negative. On the other hand, there is enormous demand for courses about particular environmental interests (wildlife, natural history, occupational health and safety, environmental legislation and management and gardening) which have a connection with wider issues
- In some areas, such as physical education and fitness, learners and tutors rarely make explicit any connection with wider environmental issues. Moreover, an individual learner may participate for only a relatively brief time (one class for one term) or for more sustained periods. There is, then, a strong case for considering how best to raise environmental awareness and understanding right *across* the adult curriculum.

Possibilities for active learning methods are evidently attractive to many adult learners in this area. Environmental learning is certainly a field where study visits and study tours have an important part to play, despite the costs involved. At present, organised adult groups make relatively limited use of such resources as the Centre for Alternative Technology or the National Organic Gardening Centre (both of which are widely used by schools). Although the Field Studies Centres certainly seek to attract adult learners, as do a number of small

independent private providers, we found little evidence of partnerships with mainstream providers of education for adults. At local level, a number of providers have developed activity-centred approaches to environmental learning, ranging from the small-scale (local Women's Institutes planting flowers on motorway verges) to larger projects (a yearly community 'environmentally-friendly fair' on a north Coventry council estate, with practical demonstrations on offer from local organisations such as the Environmental Services Department's highly popular 'bugmobile').

2.3 From *ad hoc* Provision to Co-ordinated Strategies

In general, providers are responding to immediate demand or to the interests of their own staff. As well as *ad hoc* and responsive provision, an encouraging number of organisations had developed, or were developing, policies on environmental issues. Most of these policies covered the curriculum; however, some organisations had developed policies on the recycling of waste, on energy conservation and ecological purchasing; one national agency, which had recently moved into purpose-built premises, had instructed the architects to consider environmental issues when designing the building. We are at the stage where every organisation should carry out a preliminary audit or review of its environmentally-focused activities, no matter how small-scale they may be at present.

This body of experience is both encouraging and important. It is encouraging because it demonstrates what can be done; important because it points to the elements of future developments. Our knowledge of it is also inevitably incomplete. With limited resources, our survey was not able to cover broadcasting organisations, environmentalist movements and associations, government information and awareness-raising campaigns and management and worker training – areas in which environmental adult education and training are often highly developed. At present, no clear national picture exists which can complement local or firm-based evaluations, and provide yardsticks for comparison and as a basis for clearly-targeted action. There is also a lack of any co-ordinated strategy for provision in the adult sector – no way of ensuring that the messages put across by different providers are supportive of one another. For

An Adult Education Service in London has a range of courses available on the local countryside, including lunch-time sessions and a series of seven woodland walks which introduce the learner to simple field study techniques, and provide background information on the ecology and history of local woodlands.

example, every local authority has a policy and identified officers for environmental issues, yet references to education are exclusively concerned with schools; similarly, businesses with environmentally responsible policies will need help in working out how to liaise with adult educators in pursuing their ideas. Despite the lack of co-ordination, and the uncertainty generated by policy changes, however, the existing situation gives some cause for optimism about the future.

Environmental adult education is clearly going on. Much is being undertaken by the providers of more formal education to adults, though they may have been slow to recognise potential education partnerships and a new clientele. It is a matter of concern that the informal providers (voluntary, commercial and statutory) who have been so important in this area should now work more closely with the educators and trainers of adults to improve standards of provision. So far, environmental educators have understandably been slow to recognise their potential adult clientele. Through the work of its voluntary Environmental Working Party, NIACE has helped the process of building new partnerships in this field. Together with those who represent environmental educators, new networks can be created which will help generate the changes needed. The potential of this work is enormous.

3
What Needs to be Done?

3.1 Developing Education for Sustainability – The Benefit

Much experience has been gained in developing adult education and training for sustainability. It is now necessary to turn that experience to use. Adult educators need to tackle the task of developing education for sustainability; environmental educators for their part need to become more effective at addressing the needs of adult learners. Action needs to be taken to identify the needs of adult learners in this area more systematically. Efforts must be made to monitor and evaluate the current situation. Many of the slogans of the environmentalist movement rightly ask us to work out what we can do here and now: 'Dig where you stand' and 'Act locally, think globally'. While most of the environmental agenda can benefit from being tackled locally, NIACE itself needs to continue developing a leading role in bringing together adult educators and environmental educators, and encourage ways of working together to achieve long-term changes in attitudes and behaviour, as well as long-term support for sustainable environmental policy. Government itself needs to set a high standard in its own behaviour (including the training and education of government workers) and in supporting effectively the developments which need to occur.

A greater concern with environmental and conservation issues has significant implications for all who are concerned with the education and training of adults. These include:

- *for educational institutions* – in helping all learners prepare for active citizenship, and responsible enjoyment of our heritage
- *for NIACE* – as a forum for co-operation and support for all those involved with adult learners
- *for employers* – to improve the quality of the environment for both economic and employee/community welfare reasons

- *for voluntary organisations* – in improving awareness and the capacity to act in essential matters of common concern
- *for TECs* – as an essential background to all training, and a core component for training in environmental occupations
- *for government* – in finding an acceptable, effective and long-term alternative to an ever-tighter tangle of regulation and control
- *for the entire community* in conserving and improving our inheritance.

3.2 Curriculum Change

To build on the emerging good practice in environmental adult education and training, a number of steps need to be taken.

First, it is clear that curriculum change is required. In *Curriculum Guidance 7*, the National Curriculum Council advised schools to approach the environment across the curriculum. Environmental education should encompass:

- education *about* the environment (through related content in subjects such as history, geography, science and technology)
- education *for* the environment (values, attitudes and action, based on a broad and balanced concern for the environment)
- education *in and through* the environment (using the natural and built environment as resources for the development of skills and for direct investigation and experience).

This provides one framework which – appropriately amended – is entirely suitable for reviewing the opportunities for adults to learn about the environment. What is missing from this framework, though, is any sense of the *purposes* which adults may bring to learning about the environment. Many adults will *start* from active participation and involvement in a key matter for their community or workplace. For environmental education to have any impact upon adults' behaviour, it must be combined with an approach to learning and teaching which places as much emphasis upon judgement, analysis and choice as upon the skills and knowledge deemed necessary in the National Curriculum.

3.3 Discussion of Values

Many commentators, educators and scientists have proposed that we all need to develop new attitudes towards nature and the environment based on values of care and respect. Teaching adults to value nature is an integral part of many natural history and local conservation classes. Attitudes of valuing nature develop partly as a result of the appreciation of the beauty, diversity and interest in life forms and natural systems. Classes which involve adults in direct appreciation of nature should therefore be encouraged, as should studies of local conditions. However, in order to develop a widespread responsible awareness of environmental issues, it is also necessary to include some explicit discussion of values in our adult education practice.

All disciplines include implicit value systems, many of which do not accord value to nature or to living systems in their own right. Obvious examples are economics, engineering and planning, as these operate directly on the environment and are only in the first stages of attempting to work out ways to include valuing natural systems in their professional theory and practice. However, there are also questions regarding valuing nature in the whole range of subjects. Examples might be as follows: *Flower arranging* – why do we value greenhouse flowers rather than wild flowers; should we pick wild flowers to use in the home? *Keep fit* – what value do we put on clean air? *Local history* – why should we conserve historical sites; is there any relationship between preserving history and preserving nature? There are many more such examples.

If we are to produce changes in attitudes, we must involve students in debate about these value systems. However, we cannot recommend a particular system of values to be taught. There is not currently sufficient agreement about any system, if indeed there ever will be. We may say broadly that we wish to bring about attitudes of respect and care for nature in our students, but within this broad definition there is the maximum room for debate. The standards here will be different for different providers; many voluntary groups openly espouse and promote particular views on environmental values. This is part of their legitimate activity. However, professional adult educators must be expected to approach these questions in a spirit of debate, whilst stating their own beliefs

'Unless scientific knowledge can be made to be more empowering, then science ... will continue to be seen as largely irrelevant to people's lives – and hence to lifelong learning.'
Lynda Birke, 1991.

and commitments. With regard to training, the situation is different yet again; a training programme should include practical elements of environmental care. Programmes should also include consideration of the purposes of this care and how it fits into a wider pattern of concern and respect for the environment.

3.4 Social Policy Issues

One of the most challenging aspects for anyone teaching environmental studies is the rapid change and development in this field. It is also inherently controversial: think about giving up *your* car, or paying more for electricity! Quality environmental education must not only offer alternative viewpoints, but supplement these by developing both critical and analytical skills and practical problem-solving skills. Social issues compound the challenge. Repeatedly at the various NIACE events and meetings of the Working Group, it has been observed that environmental adult education has been supremely unsuccessful at involving the disadvantaged; 'green' lifestyles are seen as the preserve of the middle class. In fact, the greatest consumption of energy, and production of waste, comes from those with the highest income levels; but the challenge of involving more adults from disadvantaged backgrounds remains. In particular, adult educators could benefit from the perspectives of the Black Environmental Network. Lastly, the scope of environmental adult education will inevitably include the political, ethical and economic aspects. Ideally, these can be addressed both directly (through specific courses on the environmental issues) and across the curriculum as a whole (for example, through local history, natural history and other topics – see Chase, 1992).

3.5 Partnerships

New partnerships can and should be established. Educators and trainers of adults should take greater notice of the expertise and experience which can be found in schools, voluntary organisations, specialist firms, consumer bodies and universities. For their part, trainers and educators of adults can offer their experience and expertise in finding flexible ways of supporting adult learners, and drawing in the many people who are not now involved in environmental

movements of any kind. Local partnerships are an obvious place to start: local firms and local government departments (planning, parks and environmental health departments, for instance) can often provide access to resources and facilities. Clearly a great deal needs to be done to clarify the contributions which different groups are able to make; nor should new partnership developments undermine the diversity and range of opportunities which can arise when people work independently. But much could be gained from the synergy of networking and co-operation which is at present lost. Particular opportunities are presented during consultation exercises: where local authorities or developers are engaged in opinion-gathering and discussion, adult educators' involvement can be vital in underpinning the participatory and active nature of the process.

Further, partnerships can and should be extended to include environmental adult educators internationally. So far as environmental education is concerned, it is entirely possible that we have far more to learn from colleagues in India or Brazil than they have to learn from us; the contribution of adult education and training to sustainable living is a problem that they have been grappling with for years. Closer to home, the German Folk High School Association has developed a range of environmental education materials for use in adult education centres. Our colleagues in the European Association for the Education of Adults and the International Council for Adult Education have identified environmental issues as a major priority for the 1990s. Through its membership of international organisations, NIACE should help members to make contact with colleagues overseas, exchange information and materials and develop displays and other resources which inform adult learners in the United Kingdom about global environmental issues in an accessible and attractive way.

3.6 Institutional Change

Third, there is also a need for institutional change. To make a serious contribution towards sustainability, and to be credible as providers, educational institutions have to look carefully at limiting their own impact on the environment. As organisations, the providers of education and training for adults are major purchasers of goods and supplies; they are also significant employers of workers. In the early 1990s, the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics

IBM's Corporate Environmental Policy, set out in the 1970s, commits the company to (a) meet or exceed all environmental regulations; (b) set its own standards where no government ones exist; (c) use non-polluting technologies wherever possible; and (d) help other industries and governments develop solutions to environmental problems.

'A green curriculum cannot be effective if it is contradicted by institutional practice which is environmentally unsound ... An environmental component improves course relevance, and environmentally responsible institutional practice helps to generate a supportive learning environment.'
Shirley Ali Khan, 1992.

encouraged member institutions to take a 'whole institution' approach to environmental management. NIACE can demonstrate good faith and set a lead here by reviewing its own site management, its use of resources and its disposal of waste. Environmentally responsible purchasing should become the responsibility of all budget holders; energy use is affected by every single worker; waste recycling can be best achieved within individual offices. Ultimately, though every employee has a part to play, responsibility for assuring an ecologically responsible, safe and attractive working environment lies with senior management.

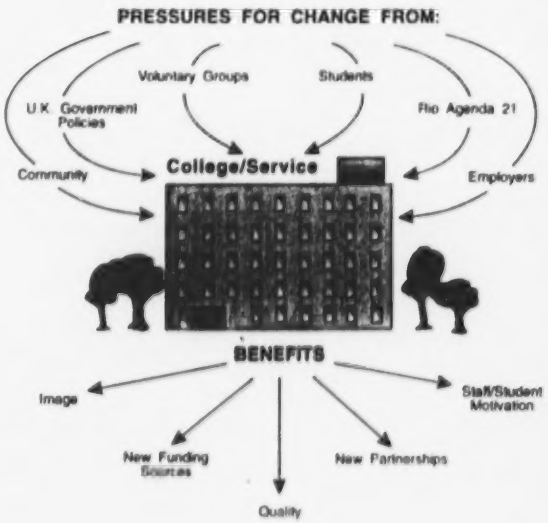
3.7 Evaluation

Fourth, evaluation should be developed. What would now be useful is a more comprehensive, larger-scale study of the existing state of environmental adult education. Our own preliminary survey was intended simply to provide a very rough indication of the kinds and level of activity that exist. Further work is now needed to provide a more detailed map of activity, and to identify examples of 'good practice'. Furthermore, financial sponsors will need to know where to place their support, and managers will wish to judge which approaches are most effective in meeting which ends. All this requires a degree of agreement on the tools needed to evaluate what is being done at local, national and – sometimes – international level. This would allow for environmental adult education and training to be effectively monitored at the level of the institution, locality, firm, and national government. In turn, we believe that environmental adult education and training should be properly resourced, so that it can be accessible, affordable and widely available, and, of course, of a high quality.

3.8 Staff Development

Finally, all these changes will need to be underpinned by effective staff development. NIACE can itself play a leading part in generating many of the changes needed by publishing a widely-distributed policy discussion paper, and sponsoring activities which bring together new partners. There is also a need for the production of resource lists; educational materials showing good practice

models and case studies; and wider opportunities for staff development. In particular, these should be focused on the development of teaching and learning approaches which encourage active participation, and analytical, critical thinking. Simple networking is a start, and – as we have found – a particularly welcome one in an area which is bound to cut across subject and discipline boundaries, as well as across the still existing vocational/non-vocational divide, and where many specialised teachers and trainers can often be isolated from developments elsewhere. Attention should also be paid to staff development for tutors and trainers whose subject is not itself purely or even mainly environmental in nature. One possibility, for instance, is to ask *all* teaching staff to consider how they might teach their own subject in a way which integrated environmental concerns (Apel, 1991).



4
Conclusions

This paper is intended to inform, influence and stimulate discussion at a number of levels. It touches on some of the major issues in environmental adult education: scientific, social, political, economic and ethical. It suggests primary strategies, both institutional and curricular, for improving awareness, understanding and action. These strategies will require constant revision and updating in response to our changing situation. With the publication of *Learning for the Future*, NIACE is seeking to encourage more coherent environmental education policies within individual organisations and organisations in partnership. The task of this paper is itself to prompt reflection, debate and action amongst all concerned with the education and training of adults.

NIACE welcomes responses to this paper, which should be addressed to Howard Fisher, Associate Director, NIACE, 19B De Montfort St, Leicester LE1 7GE. NIACE would be pleased to receive copies of policy papers or action plans on the topics discussed in *Learning for the Future*..

Further copies of *Learning for the Future* are available from NIACE at £4.95 per copy, inc. postage and packing. Payment must accompany order.

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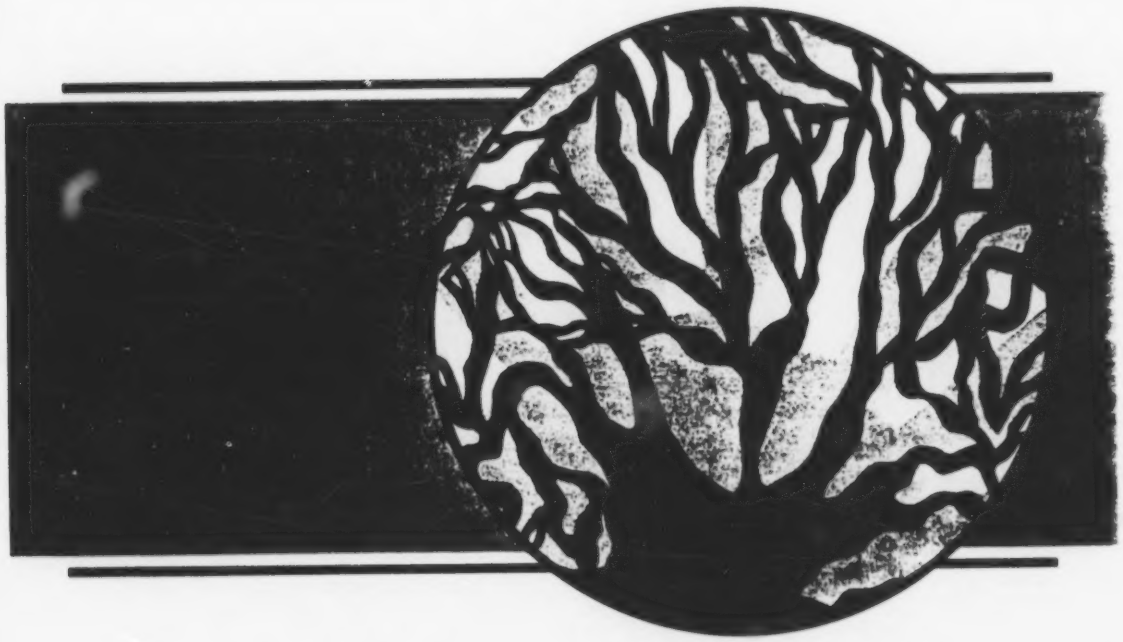
Adult Learning and the Environment



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